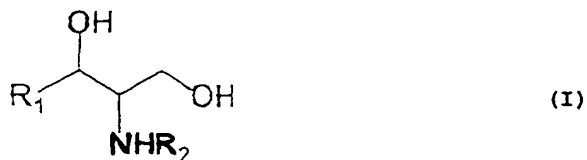


AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

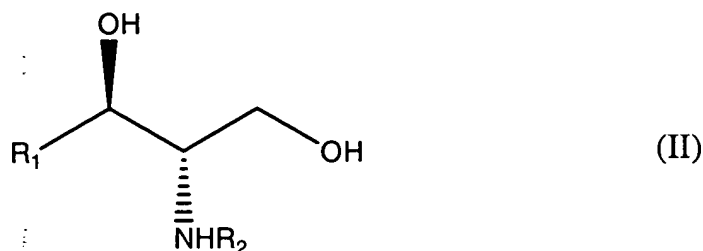
1. (currently amended): A clear aqueous ceramide composition, which is not irritating to the skin, consisting essentially of (A) 1.0 to 5.0% by weight, based on the total composition, of a ceramide represented by formula (I):



wherein R₁ represents a hydrocarbon group having 9 to 17 carbon atoms; and R₂ represents an acyl group having 2 to 30 carbon atoms which can contain a hydroxyl group,

(B) a long-chain fatty acid having 12 to 24 carbon atoms, (C) a nonionic surface active agent, and (D) water, wherein the weight ratio of component (A) to component (B) is from 20:1 to 1:3, and the weight ratio of component (A) to component (C) is from 1:1 to 1:10.

2. (original): The clear aqueous ceramide composition according to claim 1, wherein said ceramide represented by formula (I) is an optically active ceramide of natural type represented by formula (II):

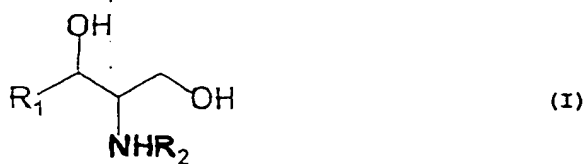


wherein R_1 and R_2 are as defined in claim 1.

3. (original): The clear aqueous ceramide composition according to claim 1, wherein said long-chain fatty acid is at least one of isostearic acid and oleic acid.

4. (original): The clear aqueous ceramide composition according to claim 1, wherein said nonionic surface active agent is a polyoxyethylene hydrogenated castor oil.

5. (currently amended): ~~The A~~ clear aqueous ceramide composition ~~according to claim 1,~~ consisting essentially of (A) 1.0 to 5.0% by weight, based on the total composition, of a ceramide represented by formula (I):

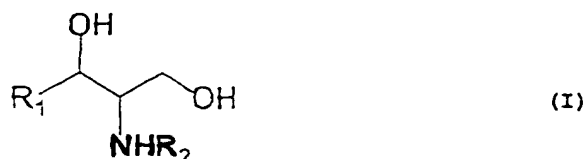


wherein R_1 represents a hydrocarbon group having 9 to 17 carbon atoms; and R_2 represents an acyl group having 2 to 30 carbon atoms which can contain a hydroxyl group,

(B) a long-chain fatty acid having 12 to 24 carbon atoms, (C) a nonionic surface active agent (D) at least one compound selected from the group consisting of a sterol compound and a polyhydric alcohol, and (E) water, wherein the weight ratio of component (A) to component (B) is from 20:1 to 1:3, and the weight ratio of component (A) to component (C) is from 1:1 to 1:10, which further comprises at least one compound selected from the group consisting of a sterol compound and a polyhydric alcohol.

6. (original): The clear aqueous ceramide composition according to claim 5, wherein said sterol compound is cholesterol.

7. (currently amended): A method of preparing a clear aqueous composition, which is not irritating to the skin, consisting essentially of 1.0 to 5.0% by weight of a ceramide represented by formula (I):



wherein R_1 represents a hydrocarbon group having 9 to 17 carbon atoms; and R_2 represents an acyl group having 2 to 30 carbon atoms which can contain a hydroxyl group,

comprising adding water to a lipid composition consisting essentially of (A) said ceramide, (B) a long-chain fatty acid having 12 to 24 carbon atoms, and (C) a nonionic surface active agent, and wherein the weight ratio of component (A) to component (B) is from 20:1 to

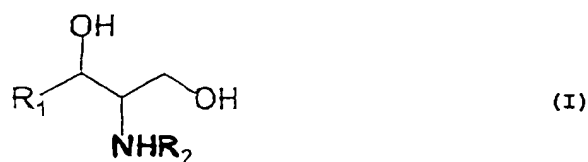
1:3, and the weight ratio of component (A) to component (C) is from 1:1 to 1:10, whereby said lipid composition upon combination with water will yield a clear aqueous ceramide composition.

8. (original): A skin-care cosmetic comprising 0.01 to 100% by weight of the clear aqueous ceramide composition of claim 1.

9. (original): A hair-care cosmetic comprising 0.01 to 50% by weight of the clear aqueous ceramide composition of claim 1.

10. (original): A bath agent comprising 0.01 to 50% by weight of the clear aqueous ceramide composition of claim 1.

11. (previously presented): A lipid composition for preparing a clear aqueous ceramide composition, the lipid composition consisting essentially of (A) a ceramide represented by formula (I):



wherein R_1 represents a hydrocarbon group having 9 to 17 carbon atoms; and R_2 represents an acyl group having 2 to 30 carbon atoms which can contain a hydroxyl group,

(B) a long-chain fatty acid having 12 to 24 carbon atoms, and (C) a nonionic surface active agent, wherein the weight ratio of component (A) to component (B) is from 20:1 to 1:3, and the weight ratio of component (A) to component (C) is from 1:1 to 1:10.